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17 November 1952

Assistant Director, Research and Reports

Pyrocatechol

1. Pyrocatechol, or catechol, has again come up as a live subject by reason of Western European inquiries for abnormally large quantities from the sole U.S. producer and apparently intended for re-export to the Soviet Bloc. The product is not now security rated for export control, but it is expected to be added to US List IA, for subsequent addition by COCOM to International List I.

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2. The background on pyrocatechol is presented so as to permit you to make proper approach to [redacted] for certain information which we desire.

3. During the war the Germans experimented with pyrocatechol as a component of fuel for a certain type of rocket. Pyrocatechol, a fraction obtained in the distillation of coal chemical by-products, is not a chemical produced in large volume. The Germans, however, had built a huge synthetic fuel plant in Czechoslovakia (at Most in the Sudetenland) in which brown coal was coked to produce coke for generating the hydrogen required for the synthetic fuel. The by-product tar from this brown coal from the coke ovens had an unusually high content of pyrocatechol. From the tar a mixture of tar acids was extracted at Most. Since the war, the Czechs have been recovering the crude pyrocatechol which the Germans called Optol.

4. The plant at Most has been rehabilitated and expanded so that it is now producing an estimated 2,000 tons of pyrocatechol per year, all of which is being shipped to the USSR.

5. The USSR is known to be experimenting with rockets and to have German rocket technicians working for them. It is believed that the pyrocatechol imported from Czechoslovakia is being used for rocket fuel tests in the USSR.

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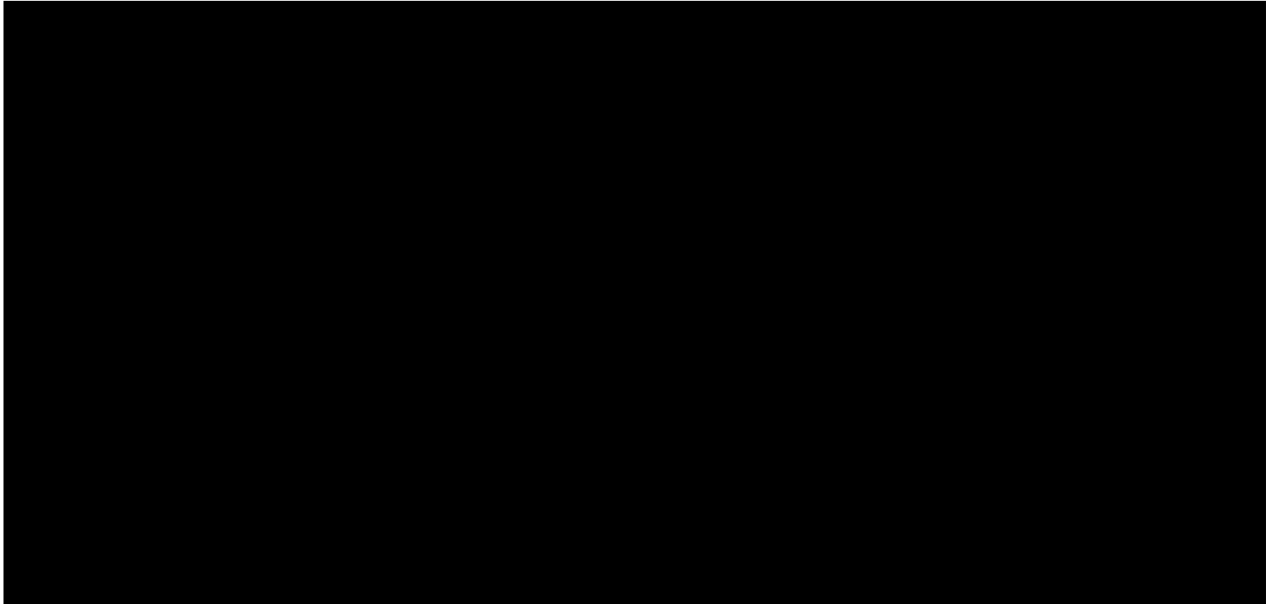
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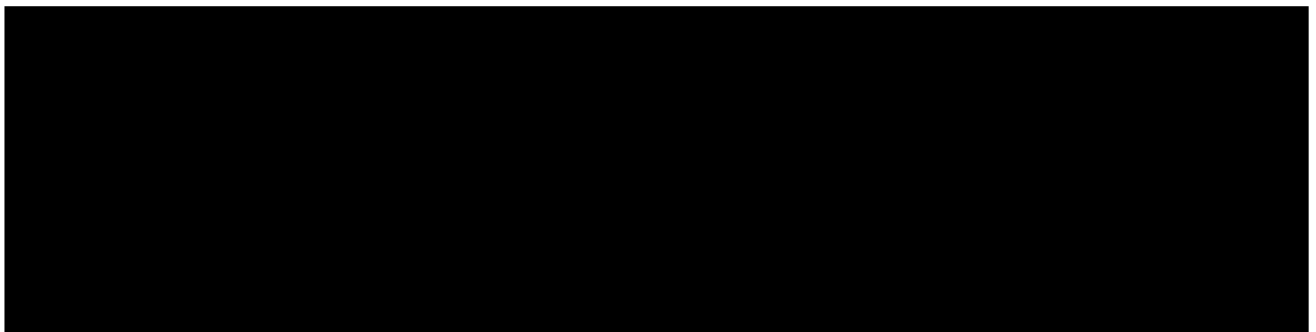
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- a. Quantity and number of foreign inquiries and/or orders for pyrocatechol received in 1951 and 1952, together with names and addresses of the inquirers and/or purchasers.
- b. Names and addresses of ultimate consignees, if known, and uses for which desired, if known.
- c. Grades and purities of pyrocatechol sought by foreign inquirers.
- d. Quantities, grades, dates, and names of original foreign purchasers of pyrocatechol on which actual shipments have been made in 1951 and 1952.
- e. Any evidence of ultimate destination of the product being the Soviet Bloc.

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10. The US product is purified to a white crystal and shipped in glass bottles of one to five pounds capacity. Normally, catechol is used as a laboratory reagent, for the manufacture of certain fur dyes, and for the production of certain synthetic perfumes. It is a small tonnage material in the normal chemical production sense. In this case, however, it may be very important and have a high military significance and potential. Therefore, anything that you can pick up from [redacted] and [redacted] will be most gratefully received. I am sure they appreciate its significance, and will be as interested as we in Western European inquiries to [redacted]

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for
ROBERT ARMY, JR.
Assistant Director
Research and Reports

ORR/RA/WHP:jz (17 November 1952)

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Note Hand-written by [redacted]:

Jim - This memo from Jap is in case you can do something for him, but does not signify a formal requirement. H

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